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The Nature and Dignity of the Human Soul.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

St. THOMAS's,

January the First, 1766.

For the Benefit of the

CHARITY-SCHOOL in *Gravel-Lane, Southwark.*

By RICHARD PRICE, F.R.S.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following diſcourſe is publiſhed in compliance with the deſire of the MANAGERS of the *Charity* for the benefit of which it was preached. It was compoſed without the leaſt view to publication; and therefore, the author hopes that it will be read with indulgence and candour.

BRITISH MUSEUM

JOB xxxii. 8.

But there is a ſpirit in man, and the inſpiration of the Almighty giveth them underſtanding.

MY deſign from theſe words is to diſcourſe to you on the nature and dignity of the human mind, and the obligation we are under to take pains in cultivating and improving it.

In order to proceed regularly on this ſubject, it is proper that I ſhould begin with obſerving, that there is in man, ſomething that is diſtinct from his body, or (to uſe the words of my text) that there is in man a ſpirit or ſoul. This is implied in ſeveral paſſages of ſcripture; as particularly in *Eccleſ.* xii. 7. *Then ſhall the duſt return to the earth as it was, and the ſpirit to God who gave it.* And in *Matt.* x. 28. *Fear not them who kill the*

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body, but are not able to kill the ſoul. But fear him who is able to deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell. Such texts as theſe, ſeem plainly to intimate, that there is a diſtinction between the ſoul and the body. — But this is a point that is capable of being demonſtrated, by many arguments from reaſon. Some of theſe I ſhall beg leave juſt to mention.

1ſt, It is ſelf-evident, that the powers of thought and reflexion, are not the ſame with any of the modifications of matter. This is juſt as plain as that any one thing is not the ſame with another. Compound, and diſpoſe, and divide matter as you pleaſe, and you will never get any thing beſides figure and motion. You will never be able to work it into thought, and memory, and reaſon. To ſuppoſe the contrary would be certainly to ſuppoſe one of the greateſt of all abſurdities. It would be juſt as rational to ſuppoſe, that ſounds, by compounding and dividing them, might be worked into a ball; or that the properties of a ſquare might be made to belong to a circle. — We have ideas of *matter*, and we have ideas of *ſpirit*. *Matter* is ſomething that is ſolid, and extended, and figured, and moveable. *Spirit* is ſomething that thinks, and wills, and judges.

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There is not the leaſt affinity between theſe ideas, and they are equally clear and conſiſtent. They repreſent properties of different ſubſtances, and to maintain that they do not, or to ſuppoſe that conſciouſneſs and thought may be only modes of figure and motion, is to run into the moſt ſenſeleſs jargon, to confound things that are eſſentially different and incompatible, and to overturn all the foundations of knowledge.

2dly, All matter is diſcerptible; that is, it is always capable of being divided into a multitude of parts. But the principle of conſciouſneſs within us is indiſcerptible, and therefore cannot be a property of matter. No one can conceive of the diviſion of what he calls *himſelf*, for the reſult of ſuch a diviſion, would be two *ſelfs*; that is, himſelf and another, which is abſurd. What I call *myſelf*, is a perfect *monad*, incapable of being divided without being annihilated, the very idea of one *ſelf* being made into more *ſelfs*, implying a contradiction. — In other words; the power of conſciouſneſs is a ſingle indiviſible property, and therefore cannot reſide in matter as its ſubject, or in any compoſition of matter; becauſe, if it did, it

would be (as every compoſition of matter is) not *one* thing, but a *multitude* of things; or it might, as all matter may, be ſplit into many independent parts, and one ſoul be thus multiplied into any number of ſouls; than which there cannot be a more palpable impoſſibility *.

3dly, All matter is inactive. It cannot change its own ſtate, or begin motion in itſelf. This is an eſſential quality of matter; and it is the foundation of all philoſophy, and of all our knowledge of nature. But every one knows, that the contrary is true of his ſoul. Every one feels that he has a power of ſelf-motion, that he can begin action or ceaſe from action as he pleaſes, and that he has an abſolute command over his thoughts and determinations. It follows, therefore, that our ſouls muſt be ſomething diſtinct from matter.

There appears, on the whole, the moſt evident inconſiſtency between the qualities of *body* and *mind*. The powers and operations of the one are not only far *ſuperior*, but entirely *repugnant* to any thing that the nature

* We can always conceive of the half of any portion of matter; but what idea can any one frame of half a ſelf, or half a conſciouſneſs?

ture of the other admits of. What? Are all our high faculties, our thoughts which wander through eternity, our imaginations which can take in the univerſe, our wills by which we can order as we pleaſe our perceptions and actions, and our underſtandings by which we inveſtigate eternal truth and diſcover the ſelf-exiſtent deity; are, I ſay, all theſe nothing but *qualities* which may reſide in a clod of earth, or the motion and figure and arrangement of the parts of a ſyſtem of ſenſeleſs matter? I really can ſcarce conceive of a much better reaſon for thinking thus, than might be drawn from that groſſneſs of ſentiment which renders any perſons capable of ſeriouſly entertaining ſuch an opinion. — But to go on.

What comes next to be obſerved to you is, that the principle of thought and reaſon in man, is not only thus *diſtinct* from his body, but alſo *independent* of it. This is a neceſſary conſequence of what has been proved. For if the ſoul and body are diſtinct ſubſtances, they muſt likewiſe be independent of one another, and the deſtruction of the one, can never of itſelf have any tendency, to infer the deſtruction of the other. — You muſt be ſenſible, that by the

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independence of the ſoul on the body, I mean an independence with reſpect to its *exiſtence*, not with reſpect to its *operations*. It is paſt doubt, that the ſoul does depend wonderfully on the body in this laſt reſpect. Thinking, judging, and willing, are operations of the ſoul; and if the body is out of order, we find that it cannot exert theſe regularly. But all that follows from hence is, that theſe *operations*, and not the *being* of the ſoul itſelf, or the *exertion* of its powers, and not the *powers themſelves* are dependent on the body. Thus, the exertion of the ſkill of a muſician depends on the good order of his inſtrument: But it would be abſurd to conclude from hence, that his ſkill itſelf, or his exiſtence, depends on his inſtrument. Whatever becomes of his inſtrument he continues the ſame. He retains in himſelf the ſame powers, and would immediately be able to exert them, upon being reſtored to a proper inſtrument. — In like manner; a live coal under aſhes, cannot ſhine, but it by no means follows, that its *capacity* of ſhining, or its *diſtinct exiſtence*, depends on the aſhes, for as ſoon as theſe are removed, it will immediately ſhine. — Theſe caſes, though they are far from coming up exactly to the caſe

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of the ſoul and body, come perhaps nearer to it than we may be ready to think. It ſeems indeed in general very plain, that one thing may be entirely dependent on another, as to its *operations*, without having the leaſt dependence upon it, as to its inherent powers and exiſtence. — The body appears to be nothing but a machine, fitted up for the convenience of the ſoul. Its different members are only inſtruments which it uſes for ſerving itſelf. All the organs of ſenſe are only avenues contrived for conveying information to it. Our eyes and hands are no more ourſelves, than the glaſs through which a man looks at a diſtant proſpect, or the ſtaff which he uſes to feel for an object, is the man himſelf. — The ſoul muſt perceive things as they are repreſented to it by the ſenſes; nor is it at all ſtrange, that when the ſenſes preſent to it falſe images in the ſame manner with realities, it ſhould be deceived; or that when the machine to which it is united is diſordered, it ſhould appear itſelf diſordered. — From what has been hitherto ſaid, it follows,

4thly, That the ſoul is naturally immortal. What we ſhould always expect is, that a being will go on to exiſt, 'till it meets with

with ſome cauſe capable of deſtroying it. But it has been proved, that the diſſolution of the body is no ſufficient cauſe of the deſtruction of the ſoul, becauſe it is diſtinct from it and independent of it. What therefore reaſon leads us to expect, is, that the ſoul will ſurvive the body. The worſt that can happen to the ſoul, in conſequence of the loſs of the body and its organs, is, that it will become inſenſible with reſpect to the external world, not that it will be annihilated; or that there will be a *ſuſpenſion* of all its powers, not that they will be *deſtroyed*. We are continually witneſſes to many facts which illuſtrate and confirm this aſſertion.

Thus a man who drops into ſound ſleep, has all his ſenſes locked up. He loſes all communication with the world, and all notices from it. The uſe of all his faculties is taken from him, and he becomes, to all appearance, as inactive and inſenſible, as if he did not exiſt. This is one of the neareſt reſemblances of death. But we all know, that there is no reaſon for concluding in this caſe, that the active and rational powers of the man are *deſtroyed*. We are ſure, on the contrary, that they are all unhurt; for in a little time he will awake, with the principles

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and habits that he had when he fell aſleep, and in every reſpect the very ſame creature. And though his ſleep ſhould have been a ſleep of a thouſand years, this would be ſtill true. He would join the moment of his waking to that of his falling aſleep, and have a perfect recollection of all that paſt, previouſly to his ſleep. We have no ſufficient reaſon for believing, that the effect of death will go much beyond what is ſimilar to this. Perhaps it may not go ſo far. Or if it ſhould, a time of reviviſcence will come, when we ſhall awake to a happy immortality, through the power of our great deliverer and Saviour *.

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* The doctrine of the natural immortality of the ſoul, in the ſenſe in which I have aſſerted it above, is neceſſary to be eſtabliſhed, before any regard can be paid to the ſcripture-doctrine of the reſurrection. For if the ſoul is not naturally capable of ſurviving the body; or, in other words, if death is unavoidably its deſtruction, then the reſurrection muſt be the reſurrection of what was not in being; the reſurrection of *nothing*. If therefore, the patrons of the ſleep of the ſoul mean to deny this doctrine, their divinity is certainly no leſs to be condemned than their philoſophy. They betray chriſtianity, while intending to do it honour, and expoſe themſelves to the juſteſt deriſion. But, however unguardedly they may ſometimes expreſs themſelves, I cannot poſſibly think that they really mean this. — I will take this opportu-

But in the next place. It follows from this account of our ſouls, that they are the higher part of our natures. They are properly *ourſelves*. The body, on the contrary, is only an appendage to our ſouls. There is in reſpect of dignity, the ſame difference between theſe two, as there is between the wood and ſtones of a houſe and the inhabitant who dwells in it; or as there is between what is inactive, lifeleſs and periſhable, and what is conſcious, reaſonable and incorruptible. The body is a ſyſtem of groſs parts, which is ready every moment to fall to pieces. The ſoul is an uncompounded and ſimple eſſence, which has in it no principles

nity to add, that ſuppoſing the original threatning to *Adam*, Gen. iii. to mean, as Mr. *Locke* aſſerts, ceaſing to be, it muſt at the ſame time be owned, that the execution of it was ſuſpended ſo far at leaſt, as to maintain the *exiſtence* of the ſoul after death. And this ſuſpenſion ought to be conſidered as one part of the effect of our redemption by Chriſt. Why then ſhould we be unwilling to believe, that the ſame redemption may extend ſo far as to be the cauſe of even the *ſenſibility* of the ſoul in the intermediate ſtate? Whether the ſcripture tells us that this is actually the caſe; or whether the account it gives of the general judgment and reſurrection, admits of its being the caſe; theſe *ought* to be, and I think, among ſenſible men, they *muſt* be, the only points in debate on the queſtion I have in view.

ciples of diſſolution. It is furniſhed with many high and noble faculties, and is capable, not only of *exiſting*, but of *improving* to all eternity. — It is manifeſt therefore, that there is no kind of compariſon between the ſoul and the body. But once more.

I may obſerve, that the ſoul is not only our higher, but our *Divine* part. The body is of the *earth*; but the ſoul is from *heaven*, and it is the *inſpiration of the Almighty that has given it underſtanding*. It is an emanation from the ſupreme intelligence. It has the image of the Deity ſtamped upon it. It partakes of his perfections, and is capable of knowing and ſerving him, of acting by the ſame rule with him, and of being happy in him for ever.

Thus you have ſeen that the ſoul is *diſtinct* from the body, that it is *independent* of it, and that it is our *higher*, our *immortal*, and *divine* part; or in other words, that there is in man a *ſpirit*; a noble, incorruptible, heaven-born *ſpirit*. — The inference from hence is very obvious, that it ought to be our principal buſineſs to take care of this *ſpirit*. The general practice of men ſeems to be the reverſe of this. We ſee them be-

ſtowing more pains on their bodies than their ſpirits. They cultivate the vile and worthleſs part of their natures, but neglect the immortal and divine. They take care of their dreſs, their houſes and eſtates, but they ſuffer their minds to lie waſte. —Of all the follies poſſible, this is the worſt and greateſt. It is the ſoul, without doubt, or that ſpirit in man of which I have been diſcourſing, that ought to be chiefly regarded and cultivated by us.

But you may aſk, what the care is which we ſhould take of our ſouls; or wherein conſiſts their proper cultivation and improvement. What remains of the preſent time ſhall be employed chiefly in anſwering this enquiry, and in repreſenting the obligations we are under to take care of our ſouls.

The anſwer to this enquiry is ſhort and plain. The proper culture of the ſoul conſiſts in furniſhing it with *knowledge* and with *virtue*. Theſe are the qualities that conſtitute its perfection and glory. As far as it wants theſe, it wants all that is valuable to it, and approaches to the level of inanimate nature.

As to *knowledge*, I would obſerve particularly, that ſome degree of it is abſolutely neceſſary

ceſſary to the practice of virtue. We cannot practiſe virtue without perceiving moral differences and being acquainted with the natures and relations of objects and agents, and the obligations reſulting from them. And as much more as we are acquainted with theſe, or as much further as our knowledge extends, ſo much the clearer views muſt we have of the importance of virtue, and ſo much the more muſt we be capable of it. It is knowledge that raiſes one being above another. It is what gives us our diſtinction as reaſonable creatures; and the greater ſtores of it we poſſeſs, the higher we are advanced in the ſcale of intelligences. One man is ſuperior to another, becauſe he knows more. An angel is ſuperior to a man for the ſame reaſon. And the Deity is ſupreme over all, becauſe he is poſſeſſed of infinite knowledge. Without knowledge a mind is rude, empty and dark, embarraſſed in prejudices and deformed by errors and folly. In order therefore to cultivate our minds, we muſt as far as we can endeavour to endue them with knowledge. There is in this an intrinſic excellence. It is the light and the guide of our minds, and the foundation of our whole dignity.

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But the other quality I have mentioned, is of ſtill greater conſequence. *Virtue* muſt be added to *knowledge*, or we ſhall remain poor and miſerable. Theſe ought never to be ſeparated. There is always a *greatneſs* in knowledge; but, when ſeparated from virtue, it is the greatneſs of a demon. There is likewiſe always an *amiableneſs* in virtue; but, when ſeparated from knowledge, it is the amiableneſs of a well-meaning bigot, or of a good-natured enthuſiaſt. It is the union of theſe two qualities that gives the ſoul its *complete* excellence. Virtue however, is, on all accounts, the moſt neceſſary and valuable quality. The ſoul that has this, is ſafe and worthy, though it may have no more knowledge than is juſt ſufficient to conſtitute it reaſonable, and to enable it to perceive moral obligations. Uprightneſs and ſincerity in the mind are its main perfection and honour. One good diſpoſition is infinitely preferable to all the accompliſhments of wit and learning; and one bad diſpoſition will do more towards defacing the mind, than all poſſible degrees of involuntary error and ignorance.

Above all things then, we ought to furniſh our minds with true virtue. By doing this we ſhall take the beſt care of them.

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By eſtabliſhing in them good diſpoſitions; by guarding them againſt the admiſſion of moral evil, uſing them to the duties of piety, and forming them to the love of God and man, we ſhall cultivate them in the moſt effectual manner; we ſhall bring them under the bleſſing of the Deity; cloath them with the richeſt ornaments; ſecure their health and improvement, and ſave them from all miſery and danger. If we fail in this, or if we yield our ſouls to the direction of evil paſſions, and neglect to turn their aims towards truth and righteouſneſs, we ſuffer them to languiſh in diſorder and ſickneſs, and deprive them of God's favour. While in ſuch a ſtate, they are all confuſion and diſtreſs. They are barren, blind and impotent, fit for no valuable purpoſe, incapable of riſing to any important ſtations under the divine government, and likely to periſh ſoon in the ſecond death.

Such is the care which we ought to take of our ſouls. The obligations under which we lie to this, are very apparent. — Our regard to *ourſelves* makes it abſolutely neceſſary. We cannot neglect it without being guilty of the greateſt injuſtice to ourſelves, without baſely *betraying* ourſelves, and ſhamefully *diſho-*

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nouring ourſelves. — It will be offering the worſt indignity to our ſouls, to neglect this care. It has already appeared how precious they are, and how ſuperior to every thing material and corruptible. A due ſenſe of this would make it impoſſible for us not to be anxious about cultivating them. Let us then think of this frequently and ſeriouſly. Let us conſider them as ſpiritual and unperiſhable ſubſtances; as partaking of the reaſon of the Deity, and as endowed with high powers which render them capable of an eternal progreſs in happineſs and perfection. How baſe and ignominious will it be to neglect what is of *ſuch* value? How inexcuſable and ſhameful to ſuffer the immortal part of our natures to be diſgraced by ignorance, to be deceived by ſilly prejudices, to be ravaged by lawleſs appetites, and undone by guilt and impiety? — Had we indeed nothing in us different from theſe carcaſſes of fleſh; were thought, and reflexion, and all our intellectual and moral powers, a certain configuration of material parts, or the reſult of a circulation of fluids which is ever varying and which will be ſoon totally deſtroyed: Were, I ſay, this true, we ſhould have much leſs reaſon for ſtudying to take care of ourſelves.

ſelves. Our ſouls, inſtead of being any thing ſubſtantial and durable, would be no more than empty ſhadows, and therefore ſcarcely worth our care. Such a low opinion of ourſelves might very naturally produce a contempt of ourſelves, and lead to views and actions proportionably low. But as we can be ſure that this opinion is as ſenſeleſsly abſurd, as it is miſerably diſcouraging; as we know that the principles of thought and judgment within us are infinitely ſuperior to the organization of the body, however, in conſequence of the laws of union, they may be affected by it in their perceptions and operations; as both the light of nature and revelation join in teaching us that doctrine concerning our ſouls on which I have inſiſted, we have the utmoſt reaſon for looking upon ourſelves with reverence. There is a ſolid foundation for ambition of the nobleſt kind; and we ſhall depretiate and vilify ourſelves moſt groſly, if we take no pains in the work of ſelf-cultivation.

But further; it is no leſs *cruel* than it is *diſhonourable* to our ſouls, to neglect taking that care of them which I have mentioned. There is no cruelty like that, which a man who neglects his ſoul, practiſes againſt him-

ſelf. The cruelty to the body which would be ſhewn by denying it food and raiment, or by ſuffering it to pine to death in the midſt of infection and uncleanneſs, is nothing to this cruelty. For think what it is to deprive our ſouls of thoſe ineſtimable bleſſings of knowledge and virtue, without which they muſt periſh; to pollute them with ſin inſtead of cloathing them with the robes of righteouſneſs; to make them dark and loathſome *dungeons*, inſtead of ſeats of order and peace, and *temples* of the ſelf-exiſtent Deity; to cauſe that to fall a ſacrifice to divine *juſtice*, which was deſigned to be a monument of divine *goodneſs*; to bereave that of all hope, which was made to live and to be happy for ever. — This, and much worſe than I can deſcribe, is what every perſon does to his ſpirit by neglecting it. — But not to enlarge much further.

Give me leave to addreſs you in a few words more of ſerious expoſtulation with you about your ſouls. You have heard *that there is a ſpirit in man, and that the inſpiration of the Almighty has given him underſtanding.* You have heard that this ſpirit is a ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, and independent of it; that it is allied to

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the infinite Deity; that it bears his image, and is capable of laſting through the boundleſs ages of eternity. In truth; one reaſonable ſoul is of infinitely more value than the whole material univerſe. — Fellow-chriſtians! Do you believe that you have ſuch ſpirits? Oh then, give up all anxious care for the body, and place your care here. Here, I ſay, where your care is ſo much wanted; where it is ſo neceſſary, and where the conſequence of negligence will be irretrievable ruin.—Your bodies are of the duſt, and they will ſoon fall back to the duſt. They will be thrown among the clods of the valley, and become food for worms. But your ſouls are of heavenly extraction, and they will outlive the ſun and the ſtars. Apply then your attention to theſe. Let theſe be the firſt objects of your ſolicitude. Mind not much how your worldly affairs go, ſo your ſouls proſper. — There is a danger, an inconceivable danger, to which they are ſubject. They have been ſtationed here in order to be qualified for future dignity and bliſs. But they are in danger of being taken from hence without being thus qualified. They are in danger of being ſeduced by the temptations of the world, of being debauch-

ed by impure paſſions, and being loſt for ever after death.—The care you ought to take of your ſouls, conſiſts in ſaving them from this danger.—You have now time for this. But it is a ſhort and precarious time. It may come to an end ſooner than you expect. Apply yourſelves then immediately and vigorouſly to this neceſſary buſineſs. Conſider that the effect of every moment's delay reaches through everlaſting ages. — You are perhaps buſy in purſuing gain and honour, and eager in making proviſion for this world. But what ſignifies any proviſion you can make for this world, if the affairs of eternity are neglected, and your ſouls are denied their proper good, and left without health, without order, without God, and without hope? — Let us think, Chriſtians, of the high worth of our ſouls, and let us learn to put a due value upon them. Let not our immortal part be employed for the vile purpoſe of tending and pampering the brute. Let not what can ſoar with *angels*, grovel in the *dirt*. Let not what is to exiſt through *eternity*, confine its views to a *moment*; or what the ſon of God died for, be chained down to this polluted earth, or given up to be the ſlave of ſin and the prey of Satan. — Remember,

member, amidſt all your purſuits, that you have ſouls to ſave. Aſk yourſelves often, what it will profit you to gain the whole world and to loſe theſe. — If our ſouls are ſafe, *we* are ſafe. If our ſouls are well, *we* are well; all is well with us, and it is of little conſequence what outward bleſſings we want. We may be happy in all circumſtances. We may look up to heaven with confidence; and we may look forwards to eternity with triumph and ecſtacy. Would to God we could attain more to this bleſſed ſtate. Let *others* ſhare this world among them. Let *others* chuſe fame, and pleaſure, and money for their happineſs. They will ſoon repent their choice, and find themſelves terribly miſtaken. Let *us* wiſh for nothing but greater degrees of wiſdom and goodneſs. Let us be anxious about nothing but ſaving our ſouls, eſtabliſhing them in tranquility and purity, and fitting them for the ſociety of angels and the fruition of the Deity.

I am ſenſible that it is now time to apply the ſubject of this diſcourſe to the occaſion of the preſent ſervice. But before I proceed to this, it is neceſſary I ſhould read to you

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an account which I have received of the preſent ſtate of the charity-ſchool, for which there is now to be a collection.

The foundation of this ſchool was laid in the year 1687, in the reign of King *James* the IId. when a ſchool was ſet up by one *Poulton* a Jeſuit, and public notice was given that he would inſtruct the children of the poor *gratis*. Upon which Mr. *Arthur Shallet*, Mr. *Samuel Warburton*, and Mr. *Ferdinando Holland*, laid the foundation of this ſchool to avoid the dangerous conſequences of a popiſh ſchool, and provide for the inſtruction of the children of the poor in the Proteſtant way.

The number of the ſcholars at firſt was 40. Afterwards it increaſed to 50; but now to 200. They are taught to read, write and cypher, and inſtructed in the principles of our common chriſtianity, and therefore qualified for the ſervice of God and man. — It may be ſaid to be the firſt ſchool the Proteſtant Diſſenters were concerned in; and here objects are received without diſtinction of parties, the common good being intended. — It is ſituated in one of the pooreſt parts of this city, and the children of the pooreſt ſort of watermen, fiſhermen, and others, are here

here taught without any expence to their parents, and furniſhed with ſpelling-books, teſtaments, catechiſms, writing and cypher-ing books; and the girls are taught to ſew and knit.

The charges have been defrayed by the gifts and ſubſcriptions of private perſons, with two annual collections, and the kind remembrance of the ſaid ſchool by ſome in their laſt wills.

The ſubject on which I have inſiſted, furniſhes us with ſome arguments of great weight, to engage our aſſiſtance in ſupporting this charity. For,

1ſt. We learn from it the importance of education. We have, you have heard, precious and heaven-born minds, capable of unlimited improvement. The buſineſs of education is, to form theſe to wiſdom and virtue, to direct them in the expanſion of their faculties, and to put them in the way to that ever-growing happineſs for which they are intended. If therefore, we will judge of the importance of education by the worth of its object and end, it muſt appear of unſpeakable importance. The eternal fate of the ſoul depends more than we can well imagine,

imagine, on the circumſtances into which it falls when firſt introduced into this world, and the bent it then receives. As far as proper care is then taken to guard it againſt ill impreſſions, and to inſtil into it good principles, there will be reaſon to hope, that the character in mature life will be worthy, and that the end will be everlaſting honor and dignity. But when little or no care of this kind is taken, it is to be expected that the ſoul will continue a barren deſart, and come at laſt to deſtruction.

This conſideration demonſtrates that there are no perſons in whom wiſdom, diligence and faithfulneſs are more neceſſary, than in the educators of youth. As they poſſeſs theſe qualifications or want them, human ſociety muſt thrive or decline, and that ſpirit which is in man, is likely to be either ſaved or undone. How melancholy is it to conſider that *ſuch* an office ſhould be truſted, as it generally is, in the hands of perſons whoſe ideas of it are ſo low, that they think its principal end is to form the body and to teach the knowledge of words? — But not to dwell on this.

What I am now ſaying, ſhould, in a particular manner, impreſs all parents. A child

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is a truſt of the moſt important nature. Every parent is charged with the care of what is more valuable than all this world. Such is the divine conſtitution, that it is left to be determined in a great meaſure by his conduct, what ſhall become of the ſouls of his children. By avoiding equally in his management of them too much ſtrictneſs and too much relaxation; by ſetting before them an amiable example, and *bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, he may be the means of adding them to the number of thoſe citizens of the heavenly Jeruſalem, who ſhall flouriſh and improve for ever under the eye of the Almighty. Happy is the parent who thus acts. He performs one of the greateſt ſervices poſſible. He ſhall join his virtuous offspring in the habitations of the juſt, and there ſee them riſe up and call him bleſſed. But if a parent neglects his duty to his children; if he ſets before them an example of irreligion, and ſuffers them to grow up looſe and unprincipled, he may expect that their blood will be required at his hands, and he ſhould tremble to think of that period of retribution, when probably they will curſe him for the negligence which has ruined them.

It is fit I ſhould add, that theſe obſervations have a tendency to engage us to lend our help towards carrying on all inſtitutions for the proper education of children, and eſpecially, of children who otherwiſe would have loſt every advantage of education. This, you have heard, is the deſign of this charity; and there is no reaſon to doubt but that it has been the means of doing much good, by reſcuing many young perſons from ignorance and wickedneſs, who would otherwiſe have grown up to be nuſances in the world, and to be miſerable hereafter. It deſerves therefore your encouragement, nor is it eaſy to conceive of any way in which we can make a better uſe of our ſubſtance, than by contributing towards its ſupport.

Again. The ſubject on which I have inſiſted, affords an argument for our liberality on this occaſion, by teaching us the importance of beneficence. This is one of the firſt of all the virtues, nor is any thing more neceſſary to the due culture of our ſouls, than that we ſhould endeavour as far as poſſible to practiſe it. The care we ought to take of our ſouls conſiſts chiefly in ſtrengthening within them the principle of benevolence,

lence, and in forming them to habits of charity and goodneſs. Such is the univerſal dependence eſtabliſhed by the Creator of the ſtates of beings on one another, that the whole courſe of nature ſeems as if it was contrived on purpoſe to give us opportunities for improving in this part of virtue, and for thus attaining to that bliſs which is moſt worthy of rational beings, and imitating the Deity in what is moſt glorious in him. We ought therefore to ſtudy to be as uſeful as we can, with that portion of worldly good which we poſſeſs. I cannot help fearing that moſt of the profeſſors of religion are apt to be too deficient here. The conſequence of diſcharging our duty faithfully in this inſtance will be our hoarding leſs, our retrenching in many articles of vain expence, our giving up ſeveral gratifications which others allow themſelves, and dying perhaps ſomewhat poorer. But this deſerves little regard. We muſt on the whole be the greateſt gainers. We ſhall gain the ſatisfaction of a ſelf-approving heart. We ſhall gain the favour of the Deity, and prepare ourſelves for the higheſt poſts of honour and uſefulneſs under his government. It is certain that our money never does us ſo much

ſervice as when we part with it in acts of kindneſs and generoſity. The ſmalleſt ſums ſpent in relieving indigence, and in promoting good deſigns, will turn at laſt to infinitely better account than the largeſt ſums ſpent in any other way.

Remember on this occaſion, particularly, how faſt life wears away, and how ſoon all you have of worldly good will be taken from you. Make then the beſt uſe of it while you have it. Time flies. ETERNITY is at hand. Every minute leaves death and judgment nearer; and when they overtake us, we ſhall wiſh that we had laboured more in the ſervice of God and man, and taken greater pains to furniſh our ſouls with that permanent good, which will remain with us when all other good ſhall fail for ever.

We have now been brought to the concluſion of another year. Before that which we are this day beginning is finiſhed, ſeveral of us will probably be numbered amongſt the dead. Let the reflexion on the ſpeed with which our years leave us, and the warnings we are continually receiving, awake us from ſleep and ſecurity. Whatever we do let us do quickly, before the poſſibility of ſalvation is loſt. In conformity to the example of our

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bleſſed Saviour, *let us work the work of him who ſent us while it is day, becauſe the night cometh when no man can work.* You may go idle into miſery. But you muſt work and ſtrive if you would be happy. May God give you a due ſenſe of theſe truths. May he elevate your thoughts above temporal objects, and engage you to act ſuitably to the dignity of your immortal ſouls. May we all of us learn to be wiſe in time, and to improve carefully every moment as it paſſes, that when the period of our diſmiſſion from hence ſhall arrive, we may welcome the approach of the king of terrors, and receive the ſtroke that ſhall part us from this life, in joyful hope of a reſurrection to a new and endleſs life through Jeſus Chriſt.

THE END.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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